



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Dale M. Volker

Senator Dale M. Volker Urges Open Discussions on the Budget Negotiations

DALE M. VOLKER March 17, 2008

Back room Deals Without Openness Hurts Public Confidence in Budget Process

(ALBANY, NY) Dale M. Volker (R-C-I, Depew) today voiced concerns that with the state budget due in less than three weeks, that no public debate, disclosure and conference committees have been scheduled to discuss openly the impact of the state budget on New York taxpayers. Rather, Governor Paterson, Senator Smith and Sheldon Silver and their Democratic conferences have decided instead to hide behind closed doors and make a mockery of the budget reform law we adopted two years ago.

"For many years, the media, good government groups and the public-at-large have urged the State Legislature to open the budget process so as to improve transparency and public debate on how state funds are utilized and spent," said Senator Dale M. Volker. "The Senate Republican Majority back in 2006 listened to their concerns and passed a law that would create conference committees that would be open to the public in order to instill confidence in the budget process. In fact, myself and many other members of the Western New York Legislative Delegation, were chairs or members of the various conference committees that protected the interests of western New York. Unfortunately, this open process is now being

eroded and instead has been replaced with middle of the night secretive meetings, behind closed doors, with no involvement from the public whatsoever. It is my opinion that the Senate and Assembly Democrats, working in collaboration with Governor Paterson, have set back the hard-fought victories of reform and openness in government and are going back to the days of dysfunction."

Additionally, it's becoming increasingly clear that Senate Democrats have no budget proposal or ideas on how to deal with the deficit or with federal stimulus moneys. They appear content to take direction from Assembly Speaker Silver. As we saw with the deficit reduction plan, I fully expect a budget to be dropped on our laps after being negotiated in secret with no public input or review. This is simply a tragedy.

Senator Volker said, "New Yorkers, particularly good government groups that have fought for more openness, should be outraged by what is going on. They should demand that Senator Smith and his fellow Democrats immediately put their budget proposals on the table and pass them. If he does so, Senate Republicans will join him in calling on the Assembly to do the same so we can begin the public conference committee process to get a budget done openly, publicly and on time. If the budget continues to be negotiated behind closed doors, without any public debate or discussion, we will turn our backs on the citizens of this state who want to know how, where and what their tax dollars are being spent on. It's the very least we can do for our citizens, and they deserve to know what is going on in Albany that impacts their lives, their families and their communities."